



The Elizabethan Dress by Outlanderzero

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Summary: The Losers Club found the creature's lair. Bill was captured, but this caused the rest of the group to overcome their fears and defeat 'It'. But what if they hadn't? What if Bill had been saved? What if the woman who saved him had gotten captured instead, and thought the kids' plan of rescue too dangerous to risk? Pennywise x OC

1. You Did Not Make This Decision

I and the remaining unharmed members of the group had descended on him. With Bill, Richie and myself on his back and the rest on his arms, it seemed like we were slowly wearing him down, until I remembered that this was a creature with far more strength than four children, even with the addition of my own adult self.

He flung his arms free before making quick work of the three of us on his back. I was the first to go, then Richie, and Bill should have come after but he was holding on so tight that instead of being thrown like we were, he was about to lay himself into the creature's arms.

I watched all of this from a position flat on my back, and to this day I don't know how I reached him in time. Apparently i'm very quick when it comes to a child's mortality.

I scrambled up and launched myself at Pennywise, grabbing Bill just as he was being flung over the the clown's shoulder. Turning, I hurled the child back to his friends and, simultaneously, felt those rough, cotton-gloved hands cage around my breasts and neck as the creature flipped through the air.

While Pennywise's landing was executed with some amount of grace, he didn't seem to give my own much regard. And considering that my head was being held against his torso, my legs were a foot or two below his feet, which could only end in my toes being cracked against the concrete floor and my knee hitting me in the jaw.

I reeled for a moment, wondering if I would have the luck to pass out, but my body seemed content to stay acutely aware of the situation.

The kid's eyes were shifting between me, the clown and then me being held by theclown, all with varying states of panic. Bill seemed to be the most horrified of them all, considering he was the one supposed to be in this situation.

Mustering a shaky but imposing voice, Beverly was the first to speak. "Let her go."

At this point, Pennywise was hunched over me, shaking. And when he heard Beverly's command his hands began twitching across my face and neck, not being able to decide how best to hold me, in case I tried to bolt. This wasn't much of an option now, considering I couldn't even get my jaw to unlock.

He smiled an awful smile and said, "No, I'll take her. I'll take *all* of you! And I'll feast on your flesh as I feed on your fear . . ."

He paused, raising a shaky finger, "or . . . you'll just leave us be. I will take her- *only* her- and then I will have my long rest . . . and you will all live to grow, and thrive and live happy lives, before old age takes you back to the weeds!"

Silence seemed to stretch on forever, except for the continued muttering from the creature holding me. The children, on the other hand, were very quiet and very still. Some of them looked like they would cry.

"Go." I said. The clarity and confidence in my voice surprising not only myself and the children, but the clown as well. In fact, now that my jaw had stopped spasming, the only thing making it difficult to talk was Pennywise's fingers unconsciously finding their way into my mouth with their anxious fidgeting.

"Do not feel bad, do not feel like this is your fault, and know that you did not make this decision."

Beverly looked like she was about to pop a blood vessel. Bill looked like he was about to faint. The rest looked like they desperately wanted to go home. But it was Richie who spoke first, slowly getting up off the ground. But he wasn't talking to me.

"I told you Bill. I *fucking* told you . . ." Bill looked over with an anguished 'why me?' look. Richie continued,

"I don't want to die. It's your fault . . . you punched me in the face . . . you made me walk through shitty water . . . you brought me to a fucking crack-head-house . . . you got Mary captured!"

He grabbed a bat that had been hidden in the pile of relics.

Oh no.

"And now, I'm gonna have to kill this fucking clown."

No, this couldn't possibly work.

"welcome to the-"

I grabbed Pennywise's jaw and jerked his head to look at me, "I will go with you!"

2. Tok!

Author's note: Thank you so, so much to the people who have reviewed, followed, favorited and read my story. I (like everybody) love reviews and welcome constructive criticism. I haven't figured out how to respond to reviews, but know that I read and appreciate every one.

Disclaimer: I do not own IT or the characters in that book/movie. I only own my OC, Mary.

Hope you guys like the next chapter!

I'd never had whiplash before; but, I'm pretty sure I have now.

The second the last word left my mouth, the creature wheeled around just in time for the bat to miss his face but land a direct hit on his back. He pitched forward and fell on top of me, suddenly I couldn't breathe or see. I thought I had blacked out. Then, I felt a hand roughly grab the back of my tee-shirt and wrench me from the ground.

I still couldn't see, but I felt him hoist me up under his arm, take several bounding steps, jump, and then land with a jolt that reverberated through my gut. Everything was very still and very quiet, and I finally raised shaking hands to wipe the dirt from my eyes.

Pennywise was standing on the edge of the sewer drain, and, naturally, I was being held on the side closest to the abyss. I looked up at the clown and he glanced down at me. I didn't look away. Neither did he.

Slowly the corners of his mouth turned up, showing rows of sharp glistening teeth, and he turned to the children still standing at arms.

I clawed at the front of his outfit, pulling myself up slightly. "We made a deal!"

"He thrusts his fists against the posts . . . and still insists he sees the ghosts." Before Bill could reach us, the upheld PVC pipe in his hand, the clown and I tipped over the ledge, falling into the darkness below.

I don't know how long I screamed. And even when I stopped, it was only because sound stopped coming out.

We fell for what for what seemed like forever. We were still falling when I opened my eyes long enough to look up and see nothing. It was pitch black. I blinked, just to make sure my eyes were open. I craned my neck back in the direction I assumed was the creature's face, but couldn't be sure. The only thing that let me know he was even still with me was the light pressure of his arm around my waist.

I turned my head forward again and let my neck relax, hoping that some of my hair would reach his face and, if nothing else, mildly annoy him.

We continued to fall.

I'm not sure if I lost consciousness or was only lulled by the whistle of the wind into a kind of semi-conscious dream, but I was jolted awake, not by landing, but by the the feeling of falling in a different direction, sideways, perpendicular to before.

We fell like this for so long that it seemed like we were still falling 'down'.

Then it happened again. We changed direction. And again, and again and again, faster and faster, until it no longer felt like falling, but more like being buffeted from all directions by a tornado or hurricane, and then we were shot out in a straight path, Gaining more speed every second!

And then it began to change. A slight, orange glow pierced the sea of darkness and slowly grew stronger. As tendrils of black encroached on the orange, a cotton-gloved hand swept over my eyes. The arm around my waist tightened, and the creature turned, effectively shielding me as we crashed through what must have been a stone or concrete wall. Then we finally landed on solid ground. Hard.

It landed first, with me on top, and we rolled a several feet before it detached itself from me and disappeared into the shadows, with a maniacal cackle.

I lay sprawled on the cold floor, panting and shivering, my eyes wide open. I wanted to lie there, be quiet, and close my eyes in a hope against hope that I might wake up in my own bed. But I knew better, so I only entertained the fantasy for a few seconds before raising up to my knees, as best as my shivering form would allow.

It was still very dark. But, there was a small circle of . . . moonlight illuminating where I sat, although I couldn't see where it was coming from. And no, I had not forgotten about the clown.

I listened very carefully, but didn't hear anything.

And I didn't see anything beyond the circle.

Until I did. Hear something, that is. A sudden '*tok!*' like the clicking of a tongue. It came from behind me.

I didn't want to give it the satisfaction of turning around, so I stayed exactly as I was. On my knees, facing forward, arms hanging limply at my sides, and my eyes wide open.

I heard it again, '*tok!*', this time from my right. And it was closer.

Then again from my left, '*tok!*', closer still.

And once more, '*tok!*', right in front of me, so close it must have been right in front of me, just beyond the light, staring right into my eyes.

An arm shot out from the darkness, It's hand landing neatly around my neck. My gasp turned to a squeak in my throat.

It slowly and silently stepped from the darkness into the light. I never looked away from it's eyes.

Still with one hand, It slowly raised me above It's head, until I was dangling several feet off the ground. And although my breath was coming in short, erratic bursts, it didn't feel like I was being choked. But I was about to be eaten, so I didn't get much comfort from this.

"Aren't you going to close your eyes?" It asked with a grin.

"No . . ." I said, raising a trembling hand. ". . . you can eat me if you want. You can terrorize me. You can go into the depths of my soul and become my deepest, darkest fears . . ."

My fingers slowly closed around It's throat, mirroring the thing itself.

". . . but you have to look at me while you do it."

Its grin widened to an unnatural degree, showing rows of sharp, glistening teeth. It brought me closer, until our noses were almost touching, and breathed in deeply.

And then its mouth started to close, its teeth barely missing my lips. Its brow was furrowed and it took a critical sniff of my cheek. Then its mouth turned down into a look of pure disgust as he jerked me away slightly causing me to gasp.

"You aren't afraid of me!" he hissed.

All I could do was stare, because I had no idea what he was talking about.

He snarled, letting go of my throat and grabbing me by the back of my shirt, all in the time it took my feet to reach the ground. He dragged me down a short flight of stairs and around a corner, threw open a door, wrenched me into a standing position and shoved me inside. I fell onto a bed and turned just in time to see him slam the door. I heard it lock, and listened as his footfalls grew fainter until they could no longer be heard.

I waited for so long. Waited for a sound, a growl, a jolt, a bite. But none of them came.

Even as I looked around the room, which was by no means well lit, I noticed that it did not possess the endless blackness and silence that the previous room had; but only the darkness and quiet that is acquired from a calm night and dark curtains.

I sat up for as long as I could, staring at the door. Unaware of the endless tears streaming down my face.

I don't remember falling asleep.

3. The Note

The soft glow of morning sunshine came through the gauze curtains on a warm, Saturday morning, and the cotton covers were pulled snugly underneath my chin. I turned onto my side and pulled my arms out; the warm, tangible summer breeze flowing over my bare breasts and stomach. I let my eyes fall closed again, because I could.

Then there was a knock at the door.

It felt like I hadn't gone to sleep, not because I was tired, but because I was very, very awake.

I turned my head to look at the large door from which the knock had originated; then there was another one, but this time more insistent.

Dragging my sore and dirty form across and off of the bed as silently as I could, I grabbed an appropriately ferocious candelabra from the nightstand and waited at the door.

This time it was just one one hard bang that caused me to flinch, the smooth weapon almost sliding out of my sweaty grip.

I was just about to try and take the safe road and open the door just a hair, when a deafening sound came through the door; like twenty pistons ramming against the seemingly now thin piece of lumber.

I scampered back until I fell against the bed, then clambered over that until I was cowering on the other side, holding the candelabra to my chest like a lifeline. The pounding only got louder, and I began to hear the very distinct sound of splintering wood.

I tried to level my breathing and go back to that summer day, in my house; with the gauze curtains and cotton sheets.

Cotton sheets...

Cotton...

Cotton gloves...

Oh, hell. I held up my end of the deal, and the creature can't leave for another 27 years. And I'll be damned if *I* stay here that long.

Gripping the now warm metal until my knuckles turned white, I flung my self up, scrambled across the bed and flung the door open.

There was a tray.

A deep mahogany tray, with brass handles, carrying a small spelt roll and a glass of water.

I slammed the door, grabbed a chair from the corner, wedged it under the latch, and sat down on the bed.

I'm not sure how long I stared at the door, furiously fidgeting my leg and holding the candelabra to my chest, but the incessant banging did not return. And I couldn't hear anything beyond the door, no matter how hard I listened.

I bit my lip and chanced a look around the room.

The walls were a neutral Tuscan orange, and the bed was a high four poster but had no canopy. There was a large wardrobe, and behind me, on the other side of the bed was a lavish dressing table with a large mirror.

And above this there were curtains. A deep navy blue with gold stars.

I looked back at the door and listened one more time, before I awkwardly hooked one arm of the three-armed candelabra into my belt loop as I walked over to the dressing table.

Made of stained pine, and polished to a glossy finish, it looked like a sturdy enough piece; but the windows were small and at least 5 feet above the mirror. That was what I was worried about.

I climbed on top of the dresser and tentatively hoisted my foot up onto the edge of the mirror, which was barely an inch thick.

I was able to jump just high enough to grab the edge of the curtain and, to my surprise, pull myself the rest of the way up, just barely balancing on the edge of the mirror.

I tried to pull the curtains apart, but they wouldn't move. My brow furrowing I tried pulling on the side.

Nothing.

I tried wedging my fingers underneath the side, but it only bent my nail back, causing me to almost lose my balance.

I felt the middle of the curtain, and there was most certainly glass behind it. So either I was much more weakened than I thought, or this was something else's doing. It might have been both, but it was definitely the latter.

And I was tired. I was *very* tired.

I yanked harder. On the edge, on the middle, anywhere my fingers could grip. And each time one hand would slip just in time for the other to grab on.

I was grunting with the effort, and then the grunts turned to whimpers, and then the whimpers turned to screams.

"You fucking psychotic freak, let me out! let me out! let me out! let me out! let me OUUUUT!"

I screamed, and yanked, and clawed, and pulled until the glass underneath me shattered and my hands slipped from the fabric.

I landed hard on my side, a sharp pain shooting through my hand, but I barely noticed.

I scrambled up and over the bed, threw the door open, fell to my knees in the threshold, began devouring the roll, and choked after the second bite. Partly from being dehydrated but mostly from the sharp, unmistakable taste of metal.

I gagged and hurled the food across the hall, but my eye was quickly drawn to the red flowing down my wrist and my heart slowed down just a bit. I'd rather it be my own blood than someone else's, but that didn't mean I liked the taste.

I spotted the water, shotgunned it and hurled the glass across the

hall.

I stared at the spot that the bread had landed. A small splat of blood on the stone wall above it. And the sparkling shards from the glass, shimmering slightly from the same unidentifiable light source that seemed to be everywhere, but most certainly did not come from the windows.

Looking down at the now empty tray, I saw a small, folded piece of paper that I was positive hadn't been there before. I, very gently, picked it up and unfolded it.

'Tick tock, tick tock, girly ~'

My eye twitched.

But then I thought of something; I reached into my back pocket, pulled out a red pen, and scribbled on the other side of the note, being careful not to drip blood on it.

'Why am I still here?'

I folded it so that my own message was on the inside, placed it back onto the tray and closed the door.

Waiting for what seemed like forever, my hands clenching and unclenching at my sides, I all but threw myself at the door when the next knock came. And just like last time there was no one there.

But, there was another piece of paper:

'Come to me after you've cleaned up, and maybe you'll find out.'

P.S. Look to your left'

I waited several moments before slowly turning my head to see another door; one that had not been there before.

And then a spot of white, just visible in my peripheral vision, caused me to turn around the rest of the way towards my bed, where the largest, most elaborate dress I had ever seen was laid.

4. Guns n' Roses

The skirt pooled at least two feet over both sides of the queen-size mattress, but it was clearly tailored to my grotesquely average height; with the top of the collar starting at the foot of the mountain of off-tan throw pillows and the bottom ending at the foot of the bed.

The material was off-white and spun with linen and cotton thread, making it heavy but soft. And if I looked very closely there was embroidering of the tiniest scale; gold thread, finer than hair, crisscrossed in rounded diamond patterns across the entire expanse of the garment, each shape no bigger than a quarter.

I glanced down at my hand; it wasn't a stream of blood, but it was enough that I didn't dare touch the dress. Instead I looked at the door that had appeared. I didn't want to go in. Didn't want to keep doing the things it wanted.

But I had to. There weren't any better options. Or I hoped there weren't, because if there were I couldn't think of them.

The doorknob sounded like screaming cats when turned, but the jarring sound did not translate into the contents of the room.

There was light, but like the rest of this place I couldn't tell where from.

There was also a claw foot tub in the corner, and to the right of that was a pull-chain toilet and a large, pedestal sink, all painted a light gold. Or maybe it was polished bronze, I couldn't be sure.

There was a mirror above the sink, and another "window" above that. With the same dark blue, gold star curtains to which I gave a look intent on combustion.

It seemed no more dangerous than the bedroom, but before I ventured in, I took the precaution of tearing a bit of fabric off the bed sheet and wrapping it around my palm.

Walking back over to the large tub, I turned the knobs and closed my

eyes. For a moment, all I could hear was the squeak of the knobs and the sputtering force of the water hitting the ceramic below. All old house bathrooms sounded like that.

But then I remembered this wasn't a house, and went back to determining how best to get clean without getting naked.

This caused me to look down at my clothes for the first time since arriving and for a second I thought I had been shot.

No. No, no.

I placed a hand over throat, hoping to coax my heart back into my chest.

You'd know if you'd been shot, I told myself.

Calmly walking to the sink, my mind raced through all that had transpired.

Ah, yes.

Looking at my face, smeared with dirt and the leftover blood that hadn't already run from my nose, down my throat and into my tee-shirt, I remembered that my head had been smashed into the dirt by a 200lb monster falling on my back, and then I was flung through a stone wall.

It all makes perfect sense now.

Suddenly the vulnerability of being naked seemed like a small price to pay, and I ripped the shirt off as fast as I could, grimacing as the wet fabric brushed across my face. And it smelled like a fish factory.

I threw the shirt to the side, but kept my jeans on and got into the water, finishing as quickly as I could. Splashing my face and scrubbing my jeans until the water ran clear. It was scalding, or at least close to it but I was so cold I didn't really notice.

Then I stepped out and, walking back to the bedroom, towel around my waist and soggy bell-bottoms leaving a trail of water, began figuring out the puzzle of the dress.

Surely for affect, it had been presented with all the undergarments inside, which was a blessing and a curse. I could retrace my steps and know what goes on first, but between the laces and masses of petticoats getting it all separated in the first place was a challenge.

Along with everything else.

The laces came undone, the petticoats kept slipping out of my hands and I'm pretty sure I heard something rip when I bent over to tie the two-inch satin laces on the heeled shoes.

Once it was conquered though, it was impressive.

The bottom was suspended two and a half feet on either side of my stockinged legs, and was hemmed high enough to showcase two bows on the points of the cream, satin heels. The boat-neck top was cinched tight around my waist and bosom, coming to a neat point just above my crotch, with the skin of my chest covered by a starched, triangle of satin tucked between it and the laces.

But this all paled in comparison to the collar; my *god* the collar!

It was a scalloped, gold and white whisk collar that came several inches above my head, and anyone could tell it was made by the hands of the century it came from.

Realizing that my jeans would never dry fast enough I forwent them for the included pantaloons. But I kept the belt, and safely tucked it underneath where the skirt and top met.

My father gave me that belt the first and only time he took me hunting.

I was six, and the kill was sloppy.

I had a clear headshot, but I bailed as I pulled the trigger and the slug landed in the poor creature's neck. It was a shotgun. It was messy. And you could tell from far away.

My dad patted me on the back as I puked into leaves and took the gun from me when I started to wail.

Kneeling down, he handed me the belt that I was wearing now, and went over to pick up the mangled, deer carcass.

Having been bought at the Piggly-Wiggly down off Highway 80, it was made for the Wisconsin hunting man. You can still see the holes that I had hammered almost down to the buckle to get it to stay on my six year old waist.

He loved me, but I was supposed to be a son. And that was the first day I realized that he would have loved me more if I had been a son.

I didn't wear this belt to remind me of my father, or as a goal of someone to get back to.

I wore this belt to remind me that I could kill.

'click, click, click' went my heels as I walked down the stone hallway.

As i'm sure it well knew, the note only stated to "come to me" but gave no indication of where "me" is. But giving the fact that to the right of my door was a dead end, I reasoned that I was supposed to go left.

I was surprised when to find out that the hall was, in fact, very short. Within twenty or so paces the wall curved, leading to a short, wide staircase where the only detail I could see of the room beyond was that it had very high, intricate ceilings.

A cold sweat broke out on my brow as I realized that this was the staircase I had been dragged down last night . . . and the room I was about to go in was the one where I had almost been eaten.

Or was it? I couldn't be sure because, except for the circle of light that I was in, it had been completely dark. And this room, while slightly muted in color, was by no means dark.

I took the final step up into the room.

"Hiya, girly." Came a voice from behind me.

I whirled around, but there was nothing there.

"Where are you?" I asked, continuing to turn around.

"Down here"

using every ounce of willpower I had left I stood my ground, and looked down to see a pasty white face poking out of the floor-boards.

Swallowing the scream in my throat, I stood frozen, watching as it slowly rose out of the floor, it's eyes never leaving mine.

Its nose briefly caught the hem of my skirt. Then its eyes were level with mine. Then it was looking down at me from several feet above my head.

Author's Note: I'm back! And I hope you guys liked this chapter. I'm always amazed at how much longer an idea is on paper than it is in my head. I had NO idea that it would take 4 chapters before we saw Pennywise again. Thanks so so much to everyone who reviewed, favorited and followed my story. I think it's going pretty well and it's nice to know others do, too. I also wanted to mention that I HIGHLY encourage constructive criticism, and if, in this chapter or others, you want to point out some things that might make the story or my writing flow better, please feel free to do so. Also, what do you guys think of my OC?

5. The Lie

F.Y.I

I was so anxious to post this chapter that I haven't had by beta go over it at all yet. I've edited it the best I can myself, but (even though I'm posting it now) I'm going to go back and have someone help me fix any mistakes. THIS WILL NOT CHANGE THE STORY AT ALL, but if you see any errors that's on me. Enjoy!

Bile rose in my throat as the thing in front of me continued to grow, rising higher and higher until the point of its bushy, red hair brushed the 30-foot ceilings.

"What a lovely dress." It giggled.

I hoped I was in the highest security mental hospital in the world, plagued with the most debilitating psychosis psychiatrists had ever seen, slouched in a wheelchair, atrophied and drooling, having pudding, thinned with water, shoveled into my mouth by a board orderly who wasn't smart enough to pass his forth year of Psych, but was smart enough to know that I had been being fed through an IV for the past 10 years.

"What-what am I supposed to do now?" I asked.

"'Wha-wha-what am I supposed to do now?' hehe, ahuh-huh-huh-huh, AHAHAHA" it threw its head back, almost hitting the large clock who's hands pointed to 5/4 past 14 o'clock, I shit you not.

The room began to shake and crumble, my arms flew over my head and I remembered my father, my mother, and the belt around my waist. Then it was quiet. I looked up and saw it staring down at me with a frown.

"You're supposed to look at me . . ." It said, squishing its oversized lips into a pout until they looked like the edge of a red bathtub.

I blinked once and it was suddenly standing right in front of me, its chest once again level with my eyes. I didn't close them and instead

craned my sore neck to look directly into its own, although I hadn't yet figured out how important this was. I heard it chuckle though.

"Oh! Oh-ho-ho-ho-ho-ho, Dearyyyyy. It's been a long, long, loooooong time since someone looked into these old, tired eyes without screaming their little head off . . . LITERALLY."

It erupted into rocouc laughter, but it was the image of people screaming their heads off that made me jump, clamping my jaw and tensing my vocal chords so as not to make a sound.

"What's wrong, girl?" A large, gloved finger came up into my field of vision as if the clown had just got a bright idea, "Don't feel as brave when you're not protecting the kiddies?"

"I never said I was brave," I responded, my voice quivering.

It tilted it's head slightly, and I found myself doing the same thing. It's eyes were sharp, bright, and far from old, but they did look—I'm not sure, tired? Yes, I think that's the right word. Nevertheless, I realized then that I didn't like it whenever I couldn't see them because I felt like they could always see me. Was that it? Maybe, but not quite.

"Eat," it said in a high, squeaky voice.

It's left arm jutted out, gesturing to a sixteen-seat table in front of a blazing fireplace that was just my height. I had been startled and looked away from it's eyes when my attention was called to the roaring fire, and before I could return my gaze to it's comfort level my back arched and my eyes locked forward as I felt it's finger begin to press against the back-string of my corset in an effort to urge me forward. I scampered ahead so it wouldn't happen again.

The fire was massive, and if this had been any other place the chairs in front of it would be aflame as well. The closer I got the more aware I become of the fact that I wouldn't be able to sit down. It was so large and so hot. The flames twisted in and around themselves in that insane way fires do. It seemed like it was getting larger, the tips of it's flames licking at the hem of my oh-so-flammable dress. Would the metal bones in the corset save bits of my torso, or would they just

adhere to my skin? I stopped, and didn't feel a hand on my back. I looked around but it was gone, and I was sure that if I turned around again my face would go up in flames.

"I can't go any further," I said to the room, "the fire's too big, it'll burn me."

A snap, coming from very close to my left ear, caused me to spin around, and when I did the fire had quelled to, what I supposed was, a reasonable size even though it was still my height.

I looked to my left where the snap had come from, and saw it standing where a chair should have been at the end of the great table. It stood so still and with an expression of sudden discontent that it looked like one of Van Gogh's painting right before the poor bastard offed himself. Ever since I got to—whatever this place is—it always seems to be overcome by an orange glow, coming from nowhere and everywhere at the same time. Like if you harnessed the light at dusk and then decided to throw sand in it. It made the clown and everything else look like a mirage, and I had to keep myself from looking at anything for too long, because if I did it seemed to waver in and out of reality, and made me feel like I would do the same. It was always like this, except when I looked at its eyes—Yes! That was it—Its eyes did not possess the same murkiness the rest of room (*world?*) did; they were the color of a glass of deep brandy with the sun shining through the other side. Beautiful in their own way, but maybe only because they looked real to me, and not like a fever dream. It seemed that its eyes were the only thing keeping me from falling into a pit of insanity, so I held onto them like a lifeline.

"What's your name."

The sudden statement—because it *was* a statement—made me jump, and for the first time since I got there I said something without thinking about it first, "what?"

"Wh-wh-what?" need a pen and paper, girly, you seemed better at those than you are at talking."

I felt something pop in my neck as I spun around at the feeling of something being thrown again my back, but when I looked down it

was only exactly that; a pen and paper—*my* pen and paper I'd been using in my room. I picked it up, keenly aware that I had turned my back on it and slowly turned around. It hadn't moved, as far as I could tell.

"Mary," I somehow didn't stutter, "my name is Mary Hawkins."

"Maaaa-RY," my name slithered out of its mouth in a tone that sounded as though it were tricking me into thinking it was searching for me when it already knew exactly where I was.

"I like it," it grinned and bowed low, "I'm Pennywise . . . but you probably already knew that."

I nodded, trying not to let my lip quiver. "I've remembered your name since Bill told me it was you who killed his brother." I didn't say it to provoke—I really didn't. I thought that I would be dead by now and had been determined not to die a blubbering, begging mess; but now that that hadn't happened and I was still alive, whatever spunk I had was flowing out of me as if I'd been shot.

"I don't mean to be rude, but may I please sit down?" If it had been any other circumstance I would have burst out laughing at the way I was addressing this ancient monster as if it was the the boss of some company at which I was hoping to get a job, but I couldn't help it. And it seemed better (*safer*) to ask than not to ask.

All at once my knees buckled as a force ran into them as one of the dining chairs scraped across the floor, causing me to sit down, hard. I did scream this time, which caused the clown at the end of the table to burst into fits of laughter and eventually double over onto the table, banging its fist against the mahogany.

"Oooohoho, you face, you should have seen your face . . . hahahaha."

My hands tightened around the smooth arms of the chair and I felt my wound split open again; a sharp slice followed by a warm, wet feeling. That same feeling was gathering around my eyes.

"Why the fuck am I still here, Pennywise?" Its fist quit banging and it looked up from the table, with an all too unhappy expression. "I

thought you wanted a meal, not a doll to dress up and play house with." It didn't matter how much I hated the tremble in my voice, because it wasn't going away any time soon.

"You wanna spoil the surprise so soon? But the party is just getting started!" It swung its arm as if making a grand gesture, and when I blinked the table was covered in a lavish array of greasy carnival food, from popcorn doused with butter (real butter, I could smell the difference), corndogs, hotdogs, cotton candy, funnel cakes, ice cream, ham burgers, and soft drinks in festive, red to-go cups with spiral straws.

It was these things; these sudden, impossible things that made me feel like if I didn't pay attention I could loose my marbles at any second. Just drop em, *slippery little suckers* as my father used to call them. *Just about darn slipped outcha hands*. I looked up, desperate to find its eyes, but it was gone. There was nothing at the end of the table except a one-eyed stuffed bear. Like one you might win at a carnival.

I looked to the side and saw its eyes only two inches from my own. Others would have thought my exhale was one of fright, but I was actually relieved; the eyes were real. They might be the last thing I see, but they were real.

"I wanna get to know you, Mary."

"What do you want to know?"

Its grin widened, "do you like things that float, Mary?"

It had one hand on the back of the chair, the other on the table, and it kept leaning closer so that its eyes would go out of focus and whenever it did this I would jerk backwards to keep my talisman of reality in check.

"No, I don't like things that float," I answered

"Why not?" It giggled, eyes growing a bit wide.

"Why haven't you killed me?"

It faltered for just a second, and the corners of its mouth twitched, although I couldn't tell if that meant it was about to frown or laugh again. It raised up, hands in a rather prissy placement at its chest, as if it was a child who'd been caught doing something bad.

"It's not bad to float, you know? Take balloons; they are never scared, never have any fears or worries. They just drift and blow, to and fro, ladi' da, all over the world until eventually, POP," It snapped its fingers in front of my nose, and slowly walked around to the side of my chair, opposite the fire. "It doesn't worry about when it will pop, though. Do you want a balloon, Mary? I think you want a balloon."

It turned around and headed to, what looked like, the sitting area where a cluster of red balloons were tied to a chair.

Praising God I wasn't pinned in the chair anymore, I calmly stood and let the unused butter knife I'd picked up while it had been bent over the table laughing slip out of my sleeve into my hand, and I plunged it into the base of its skull, running in the opposite direction before my fingers left the handle.

I heard a scream that reverberated through my blood, bone and muscle but I didn't stop. I ran through the small doorway at the other end of the room, up the spiral staircase so fast that I was dizzy, fell, cracking my knee on the stone, got up and kept running, running, running until there was another doorway and I ran through that down another hallway. I wondered if I kept running and found more staircases—and I just didn't stop—if eventually I'd pop out of some whole in the earth, the *real* earth. I ran around a corner and then crashed into something, my tailbone only saved by my bustle.

It was the clown that I had run into, of course.

It was hunched over so all I could see was the point of its red hair, pointed at the center of my chest like a sniper's mark.

I rolled over to run the other way but my face met with a stone wall that hadn't been there before. When I turned back the hunched figure seemed just a little bit closer. My breathing felt like it did the time my family and I went on the ski lift at the resort a few miles outside of Derry. I was bundled in every coat, scarf and long-john that the

small, albeit well-stocked, giftshop contained, but I still felt cold. And when I'm cold my breath seems to come far too easily and the world seems far too real. Like its lines would cut me if I moved. I felt cold here, staring at the top of It's head, and I had been cut by a sharp edge of the world. But I still had to move.

It twitched, stumbled and stood, ramrod straight, head tilted down just enough to look at me. Then it's face started to melt. No wait—yes, but only to let the blade break through the space between it's nose and mouth and fall to floor with a dull *thunk*, just like the deer.

"Run." It said.

I looked at the knife and then back at it. But I didn't make any move to run.

It took a step towards me, a crack appearing in the stone ground below its foot.

"Why aren't you running?" it's voice was slightly drowned by the crumble following its footfalls as it got closer.

"Why haven't you killed me?" I asked.

This made it pause, cocking it's head, although I couldn't tell what it was thinking.

"Why haven't you—" As I began to repeat myself it lurched forward and I thought it had grabbed me because suddenly my satin-clad feet were dangling a few inches above the ground, but as far as I could tell it wasn't touching me anywhere. I was still looking into its eyes when the knife whizzed across the floor into Pennywise's hand where he held it underneath my sternum.

We stood like that for some time with no sound at all. Not a flutter.

Then it spoke, with as close to an amicable expression that could come of that face.

"I don't want to kill you," it said.

I grabbed the hand that was holding the knife with both of my own

and tried to turn it to stab the creature. It didn't work of course, but Pennywise must have been a little surprised because whatever had been holding me against the wall suddenly let go and I toppled to the ground, landing ungracefully on all fours. I thought it must have moved right as I fell, but as I raised my self up and looked down I saw its flouncy, gray-clad leg was poking through my stomach although, I couldn't feel it. To be honest, at this point I wasn't paying much attention to these, now, minor oddities because it had just revealed something to me.

"Yes you do," I said, and then got up and slowly walked through the monster's back. "you want to, very badly. . ." I turned to face it, trembling despite myself. "But for some reason, you can't."

It snarled, lips peeling back slightly from the great rows of teeth, and it seemed to grow just a bit. But it still didn't touch me. In fact, in retrospect it didn't seem to like touching me any more that it had to. Yes, of course it did when it flung me into the room, or guided me towards the table, but that had been when it was moving me; not touching. There's a difference, and I learned that difference a long time ago.

I reached up and poked it on its red nose. I hadn't even realized I had lifted my arms, and almost as quickly as I could pull my arm back, the monster in front of me scampered back, hitting the wall it had created. We both stared at each other for a long time, I think both not believing what I had just done. Then it started to smile. At first I thought it was snarling again, but it wasn't. It was smiling so big that it reached the monster's sharp, yellow eyes.

"You're not scared of me, are you, Mary?"

I looked like I was, I'm sure of it. But with furrowed brows I slowly shook my head no. I reminded myself of my father when my mother would ask if he had been drinking, only I was able to meet the eyes of the thing I was talking to.

"Is that why you can't kill me?" I asked.

"Maybe. Or maybe it's that your head was screwed on too tight." It giggled and I closed my eyes as The Grinch Stole Christmas was

forever ruined by the image of the monster in front of me trying to loosen my head from my shoulders.

"You may not be scared of ol' Pennywise, but you'll wish you were." It said.

"Why?"

The wall on which it was leaning crumbled and it started to walk backwards towards the stairs. Just as it's form was about to disappear behind the door I'd run through only five minutes before, it answered,

"Cause you'll have to stay with me for the next 27 years."

It slipped into the door frame, and I wouldn't see it again for seven days. But this wasn't what caused me crumple into the flounces of my skirts and lay there for hours looking like Juliet in the final act. It was the thought of the first and only lie I ever told Pennywise-

That I wasn't afraid of him.

I survived finals! It feels so good to be back and writing this story, and I hope everyone liked the latest installment. Is the story going the way you expected? Also, I've started reading IT (the original lol) and oh my god, It's so amazing. That's actually what inspired me to start writing this story again, so, if you like Pennywise and you haven't read the book yet, I highly recommend it!